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RELIGION AND MEDICINE *

I.

The learned and long-worded "Teufelsdröckh" remarks with his persistent plainness, "let the curious eye gratify itself in observing how the old antediluvian feeling still, though now struggling out so imperfectly, and forced into unexpected shapes, asserts its existence in the newest man; and the Chaldeans or old Persians, with their Zerdusht, differ only in vesture and dialect from the French, with their Voltaire *étouffé sous des roses*." Having quoted such profound authority to prove the changelessness of human nature, let us be so bold as to aver that the Emmanuel Movement is bound to be a great success.

If men and women had acquired new instincts and new characteristics along with porcelain bath tubs and telephones; if with the increase of population there had come an increase in contentment; then we might expect to find it necessary to record new theories and new demands; but the man who travels by underground to-day looks at life from the same point of view as he who traveled with the assistance of his tail, and the man who eats breakfast food to-day, digests it just in the manner of the man who once upon a time (sinful to relate) ate his mother-in-law. All of which being inevitably so, and in consideration of the further fact which history shows us that our ancestors were only too willing to receive any kind of medicine-man who could alleviate their pains, we are bound to expect that any panacea, which is really an *acea*, will be joyfully received by the multitudes of this generation. Did not thousands flock to the footstool of the son of Signor Pietro Balsamo, surnamed Count Alessandro di Cagliostro?—did not Bombastus Paraphrastus Paracelsus have his adherents?—and what charlatan has not

*THE MORAL CONTROL OF NERVOUS DISORDERS. By Elwood Worcester, D.D., Samuel McComb, D.D., Isador H. Coriat, M.D. Moffat, Yard & Company. 1908.

had his followers?—and further, which of them has not succeeded in curing, really curing, many of his patients?

Having said so much, we must hasten to make two other remarks; the first, that we most decidedly do not mean to class Dr. Worcester with Cagliostro and Paracelsus; the second, that we do mean by alluding to those gentlemen of shady reputation to illustrate the psychological principles by which the Emmanuel psychotherapists avowedly effect their cures.

It is exceedingly interesting to one who has long understood by intinct the power of "suggestion" and "autosuggestion," to read a book which explicates it in a scientific way; and more, it is a delight to read a book on such a difficult subject which is so clearly and distinctly written. If Drs. Worcester, McComb and Coriat intend that obscure psychology shall be intelligible to those of little intellect they have indeed succeeded. We commend their book to anybody and everybody, not only to those who are in need of help to withstand the assaults of their nerves, but to those who are interested in the developments of modern psychology. It is a brilliantly simple book on an obscure subject, and on a subject which everybody ought to know something about.

To be more specific, the key-note of the work is the susceptibility of mankind to kindly persuasion. Or, to put it in another way, the instinctive readiness of people to believe what is for their good, and the resultant fact that wherever it is a matter of nerves only, accomplishment follows belief, realization becomes anticipation. To the force of this law can be ascribed all of the cures of the Christian Scientists, faith-healers and the like, and to its force do the Emmanuel workers look for a demonstration of their claim—that they can cure many of those who are suffering from functional disorders.

Probably the greatest significance of the whole movement is in its relation to Christian Science. Says Dr. Worcester trenchantly (page 10): "The doctrines of Christian Science have been denounced, ridiculed, exploited times without number, apparently with as much effect as throwing pebbles at the sea to check the rising of the tide. Preachers, physicians, editors of powerful journals, philosophers, humorists, unite in pouring

contempt upon this despicable superstition — but in spite of them it lives — and all this strange phenomenon has occurred in the full light of day at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century . . . not in obscure corners of the earth among an illiterate and fanatical populace, but in the chief centers of American civilization.” We might add that America is not alone the field of their victories, for the movement finds more and more adherents each day in England, while Germany is able to suppress it only by making it *strengste polizeilich verboten*.

Now what are we going to say to those who refer to the “proof of their pudding?” We cannot shut our eyes to an obvious fact: the success of Christian Science. We can say two things: in the first place, that what is good in it will endure, and endure in such forms as the Emmanuel Movement; in the second place, that the absurdities of its philosophical abracadabra will speedily vanish into thin air, and men will forget Mrs. Eddy, the Goddess, and remember Mrs. Eddy the very shrewd individual who staked her all on the power of suggestion — and won. The reason which emboldens us to prophecy that the Eddy-worship part of Christian Science will vanish, is that we do not believe that the universal law of “die to live” can be abrogated, even by a shrewd woman. Nothing can survive the wild-fire like success with which that body has forged ahead in the past twenty-five years. Like the boom cities of America it will burst some day, and when it does burst, and men stoop to gather up the fragments, those who will get the largest number of baskets-full will be Dr. Worcester, Dr. McComb and their disciples.

One very interesting aspect of the book is to be found in the light which it sheds upon contemporary psychology. Those who have read Morton Prince’s “Dissociation of a Personality” and Meyer’s “Human Personality” and DuBois’ “Treatment of Nervous Diseases,” or the articles on abnormal psychology in *The American Journal*, will find much in this book which will widen and crystalize the ideas accumulated in them. In fact the book is a handbook of the greatest value, being adapted to the needs of the amateur as well as the professional.

In this materialistic age it is well to be reminded of the power of suggestion. It is a stumbling block to the out and out empiricist and a rock of retreat for the timid apologist. The limits of its dominion are all unknown.

We are persuaded that in our reference to Cagliostro and Paracelsus we are entirely in accord with the Emmanuel psychologists and feel sure that they would admit that the whole secret of the success of those charlatans is to be found in the existence of that very power of suggestion. In fact, in one place Dr. Worcester declares that much curative power lies in "glowing advertisements . . . and marvelous testimonials, bearing witness to striking cures;" and all this because the sufferer believes that "a remedy that relieved so many others will surely help him." As a matter of fact, "when these remedies are analyzed their physiological potency is seen usually to be nil" (page 51), but that makes small difference; for given a patient sufficiently subject to suggestion and a panacea sufficiently prodigious (according to its advertisement) you can generally count on a complete cure. It is the very *boldness* of your quack which inspires faith, and it is the faith which heals in cases where the trouble is purely functional. The writer well remembers many years ago watching the manipulations of one "Sequa," an hocus Indian Chief, who travelled about England in a band wagon, alluring crowds to his lectures each evening; and how after his lecture—which was overflowing with superb medicinal impudence, he would sell (at a reduced price, because he did so love the populace) bottles of a certain liquid which would cure anything and everything. Now, to the writer's knowledge, that fluid cured a cripple, who had been despaired of by every physician in the country. Even so effective is faith! To be sure, it is perilous thus to encourage quacks, but all gifts are dangerous in certain hands, and we must be prepared for a mingling of the bad with the good.

Probably the authors of the book avoided all startling illustrations of the effectiveness of their work, lest they incite criticism, but we feel sure that they have worked cures far more spectacular than any which they cite in their book.

Of all phases of the work, their dealings with alcohol is the

most interesting and the most valuable (pages 134 ff. and 163 ff.). One is tempted in these days, as he reads of the enormity of the liquor traffic, to applaud the harangues of the most intemperate temperance orators. The licensing bill in England, the increased levy upon intoxicants in France, the Anti-Beer League in Germany, the prohibition wave in the Southern States, none of these estimable efforts is going to quench the thirsts which an hundred years of unrighteous licensing has aroused. The public vending of alcohol may be suppressed, but —

“All the king’s horses and all the king’s men
Cannot put Humpty Drunk together again.”

Now in dealing with the flotsam and jetsam from the ocean of alcohol, the methods adopted at Emmanuel are most efficacious. Without doubt, the several cures which are so widely advertised (and, to tell a secret, whose circulars are so widely sent to the clergy of the land, with what significance we know not) are able to scotch the Demon in many cases. But the liquor habit, whether dipsomania or alcoholism, is, as Dr. Worcester so plainly points out, a disease of the nerves, and a moral disease. Whenever your patent “gold cure” destroys the thirst, it can generally be put down to psychic rather than to physiological activity; in other words, to suggestion; and therefore it stands to reason that without the subtle liquid, just as well as with it, the cure could have been effected. This is just what is being done at Emmanuel — all honor to any work which can quell the passions of the inebriate! Humor invades all sanctums, and we cannot but interject a word of humorous, though truthful intent, to say that the two kinds of people who seem most freely to have sought help from these men in Boston are those suffering from liquor, and from pulpit fright.

As to our opinion upon the future in store for the work — How much will it be practiced and how widely? It is platitudinous to say that there is great danger in an ill-advised adoption of the scheme. Sad to say there are as many potential charlatans in Orders as out of them, and any such work as this offers to the insincere a bonanza. And yet, despite the dan-

gers, Drs. Worcester and McComb make two statements which to the writer are unanswerable:

"We affirm that the Church of Christ cannot permanently uphold and propagate itself by anything less spiritual, less comprehensive and tremendous than the Christian religion, and the plain truth is that the Church is not bringing the whole force of the Christian religion to bear upon the lives of the people" (page 321). And again, "We remember that Jesus recognized human nature in its entirety, that in His solicitude for the soul, He did not forget the body, and that in giving peace to the conscience He also gave health to the entire man — this noble truth has long been allowed to drop from the Church's conception of its mission, but it will not be ignored much longer. Everywhere men and women are seeking for this lost truth . . . and hence . . . we see the same feverish anxiety . . . to follow any false Messiah who promises to restore it to them. . . It is plain to the unprejudiced student of religion that one cause of the Church's weakness is that the Church has mutilated the Christian religion, retaining in some degree of faith Christ's message to the soul, but rejecting with unbelief His ministry to the body."

It is indeed a sorrowful commentary on conditions that the clergymen are not nowadays called into the sickroom until the doctors have given up hope.

Adjustment to environment is and ever will be the law of life, and adjustment to a more highly developed use of psychic powers must be undertaken by the Church if it is to live. The Emmanuel plan is bound to be adopted on all sides, and we are certain to hear a vast amount about psychotherapy in the near future.

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II.

The authors of this book are evidently impressed with the importance of their religio-medical undertaking. Their sense of its importance is enhanced by the measure of success that has already greeted it. In a year or so it has helped a thou-

sand or more sick bodies or sick souls or sick body-souls or sick soul-bodies to semblance of health. Its specific task is the scientific application of religion to disease. Religion has been at work in this direction ever since the first prehistoric fetish wrought health spells as well as spells of blight, but its power was not psychological, and of course could not be psychologically applied. Nor could it have been so applied at any period before our own, when there is much talk about the discovery of "the subconscious mind," and its susceptibility to hypnotic control or "suggestion," together with the wonderful go of a certain quack cult which could show no other cause of the wind-like rush of its popularity than the undeniable cures it noised into creed-proofs as it went. Hence the query whether still greater things might not be done if a true religion with a true psychology should claim the same medicative power. The answer was the Emmanuel Church experiment, now called the Emmanuel Church Movement; for the authors have heard "the sound of a going in the tree-tops," and believed there was tremendous weather ahead. This book is the first thunder-clap.

I am not prophet enough to say that the thunder-shower may not grow to a tempest, though even then it would only blow itself out with a louder blast; but I seriously doubt whether it, any more than the Eddyotic gale it would out-reverberate, will ever flood this dry old self-conscious and self-critical world of ours with the waters of heaven. Many cloud-bursts wash over bottoms that never reach hill-tops, and these two movements have all the signs of swamp-freshets. To gauge them rightly we must have other standards than those of the newspaper, which writes chronicles by the day and counts a year an epoch. History shakes a sieve of much larger holes, through which newspapers themselves will sift by the hundred without leaving a trace of their names; and fashions, that newspapers were sure had come to stay, will drop out of sight as things of a moment; and even religions that look like boulders will disappear as dust. For such a sieve Eddyotic success has not yet reached the size of a grain of sand, and the Emmanuel Church Movement is atomic.

Greater movements of the same or a better kind are going on

every year in the Roman Church without winning a newspaper headline, just because they are too constant and common to make news. Few high-grade saints in the Roman Calendar have not had more votaries and cured more maladies than Mama Eddy's braggarts will ever boast for her Mamacy. The millions who have knelt to a pretended piece of the Cross, or to a handful of dust from the Holy Sepulchre, or to the Holy Coat of Treves and its rival rags, or to a dead bone of any first-class martyr, ought to shame our would-be newspaper historians into some decent sense of historic proportion in their contemporary estimates.

Have the authors of "Science and Health"—excuse the slip, I mean "Religion and Medicine"—never heard of Ancona, the city named by its enshrinement of a stone that had rebounded from the arm of St. Stephen, whose proper relics were carried later to Uzali, near Hippo, the See of St. Augustine; and how that saint lauded their marvelous works? "Stephen triumphed, he was crowned, long time his body lay hid; at length it came forth, it enlightened the lands — so many miracles did it effect; the Dead, because not dead indeed, made the dead live." Read the two books, *De Miraculis Stephani*, which Augustus quotes in addition to his personal testimony, and tell me if the entire career of the American epidemic of hysteria in worship of an arch-Hysteriac, has one-tenth of the power of one particle of the dust of one spurious toe-joint of the proto-martyr after he had been decomposed for four hundred years? And if you wish more contemporaneous or newspaper evidence, get the statistics of modern Lourdes, and the thousand thousands of worshipers, who in every town of Christendom tell the marvels of its stagnant water drops.

As for the Emmanuel Church Movement, which has screamed out a book before it is five years old that the anxious world may learn from a snake-strangling infancy what Herculean feats are yet to come, the scream is too loud for its grip. More people went in a month to be bodily blessed by the "suggestions" of a half-faded miraculous picture in a Redemptorist Church in St. Louis than twice five years of Boston are likely to see around the Protestant Episcopal effort to scientificate Eddyotic success.

However, science is science, whether it moves fast or slow, and on that score the Protestant Episcopal spurt must be tested; first, by the idea of psychology which it would apply to religion, and second, by the idea of religion which it would psychologize. And my reason for thinking the spurt will never go far is that its psychology has a wooden leg, and its religion leads to a bog.

I do not believe there is any such science as the Emmanuel Church Movement teaches under the name of psychology, nor do I believe in any science of psychology whatever. The very attempt at it is a foredoomed absurdity. The Self is not a thing or event in time that it can be known as a succession of states under time-laws of cause and effect. Time is but one of its categories, and next to space, the emptiest. The Self, which knows a time series, cannot be any part of the series the whole length of which exists within its knowledge. It can only know itself as the total unity of all its categories and all their knowings. Certainly it can never know itself as unknown or subconscious.

Consciousness and knowledge are one; what is out of consciousness is out of knowledge, whether it be *sub* or *super*; and what is out of knowledge, knowledge has no right to talk about, much less write books about. The talk and the books can only exploit the ignorance they advertise in their very technique. Ignorance cannot tell what happens in the dark; nor would it try were it not so utterly ignorant of its ignorance as to imagine it the soul of a science whose truths grow divine in proportion to their darkness. Right-minded science explains the unconscious by the conscious, and pronounces it the unsciencing of science to reverse the process, and put the lights out in order to see the secrets of the universe. Darkness it hates with a religious hatred, and would drive away as the Devil's shadow. The turn is bold indeed, not to say impudent, that would name the shadow God. But the psychology of the Emmanuel Church Movement dares so name it.

Here are some of the steps by which that psychology leads the soul down into the cellars of consciousness as if it were "climbing up the golden stairs:"

"I place the patient in a comfortable reclining chair, instruct him how to relax his arms, his legs, his neck, his head

and body, so that there shall be no nervous tension or muscular effort. Then standing behind him I gently stroke his forehead and temples, which has a soothing and a distracting effect. Without attempting to induce sleep I inform him that his body is resting and that his mind too will rest I then tell him that all nervousness is passing from him, that everything is still within him, that his heart is beating quietly and regularly and that he is breathing gently and slowly. I suggest to him that he is *entering into peace*. . . . I personally attach a religious importance to this state of the mind. When our minds are in a *state of peace* I believe that the Spirit of God enters into us, and a power not our own takes possession of us."

Note how this state of peace is brought about by the limpness of the patient's mind. He is to relax his body. He is not to think his own thoughts, but the thoughts of his psychic guide, even repeating the guide's words as his own. He is to evacuate his reason, and give the helm of his personality into another's hands, and then, when his reason is gone, and his selfhood surrendered, he has entered into the subconscious state which is called "peace," the peace of God, whereby God's power works its cure. The man nears God as he loses his mind; when he has no mind of his own, God takes the place of it, and hence a cure which is entirely beyond his conscious reach. The less mind, the more God. Perhaps this is the reason or unreason why idiots are so healthy. Lean wits make fat bodies. Be a fool and you have already begun immortality.

But what if the imaginary health be the displacement of one disease by another, strengthening the body by weakening the mind, and easing pain of the flesh by a habitual opium-habit of spirit? Pauperism of spirit is meaner than any misery it relieves. The Devil can work by suggestions just as hypnotic on like surrenders of will, to cure just as incurable ailments. Tuck gives many instances of cures by mean or malign emotions. I cite two: The rubbing of an inveterate wart with a piece of stolen bacon—the bacon must be stolen—causes the warts to disappear as the bacon rots. The pretence of an immediate autopsy scares scirrhus of the liver out of articulo mortis into runaway life. I myself heard the chief physician of a large city coach a

class of medical students in the magnificent therapy of deceit, and tell them how a patient of his had pined away with the fixed idea that a frog had grown in her stomach from some pollywog-gish water she had drunk; and how no poison or persuasion could stop croak and jump until the stomach-pump brought up a green-skinned thing which he had ready for the moment, and set right under her satisfied nose.

Now if the Emmanuel Church cures belong to God because done in the soul's dark, these tricks, as darkly done, together with the myriad hypnotic miracles of fraudulent relics may be imputed to the Devil; and the test question at once arises, Which of the rivals has proved the more darkly efficacious, and whose clinic should be advised with the surer confidence of dark success? Between them, the honors are presumptively in favor of the Devil. For darkness is his favorite realm, not God's. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. God is intelligence and the way to His power is through heavens of knowledge, not down in the pits of being. The universe is a universe of consciousness, more and more manifestly divine as it rises towards that perfect consciousness of itself which is God. The instinct of the animal is God's felt consciousness; the reason of the man is God's known consciousness; and the difference between the conscious and so-called subconscious mind is precisely the difference between knowledge and vague knowledge, or between reason and implicit reason, or between man and animal. The so-called subconscious mind is simply the animal mind in man, that is, man's lowest, meagerest degree of manhood; and your method of hypnotic or semi-hypnotic cures simply unmans the man to animalize him into health. The health got by it is animal, not human, surely not divine, unless you animalize God too as more God-like with horns and tail than with the brow of reason. The Christian religion, however, worships Him as the God-man, not the God-beast, though the beast were as harmless as a dove with butterflies for angels.

The Emmanuel Church Movement moves the wrong way. William James must have hoo-dooed its authors before they set their faces in the animal direction. He wrote a book to prove religion a cross between the human and animal minds. It was

down there in the hysterical and cataleptic sinks of reason that he saw the sulphur-springs of divine truth bubbling with foul but holy gases. Through swoons and trances the telepathic and clairvoyant instincts of beaver and spider and migrant fish played up into prophetic dreams or mediumistic revelations. The action was morbid, but diseases often intensified powers of health to præternormal exercises, and religion was just such a disease of reason, superrational because subrational. To find its God, therefore, you must not fly direct towards the mind's sky, but wallow in its puddles. The black splashes will be baptismal to your saner fellows, whose sanity makes them skeptical.

To complete such psychological training, it was only necessary for the authors of "Religion and Medicine" to take Von Hartmann for their philosopher and swear by his doctrine of an Unconscious Absolute, or God as the Absolute Fool of the Universe. And this they have subconsciously done, while still calling Him Heavenly Father as if to acknowledge their mental heredity. Better than their psychology, their religion still weaves too much psychological black into the white robe of its ancient creeds, not to look suspiciously gray. You can detect the black threads by a name here and there, and the shibboleth of thoughts that run through entire chapters. Here, for illustration, is its bed-roll: Augustine, Dominic, Francis of Assisi, Wickliffe, Savonarola, Martin Luther, Boehme, Tauler, Fox and his friends, Wesley, Schleiermacher, Newman, Keble, Fechner, *Harnack*. What bathos, to blow up so big and high-sailing a balloon for that last pin-hole collapse! Translated into a roll of musicians, it would read: Palestrina, Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Handel, Haydn, Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Liszt, Wagner, "Pat" Gilmore and "Blind Tom." In both rolls it is the blindness that makes the climacteric seer.

And if Harnack's canonization does not convince you of the agnostic streak, you may hear something like a college yell of demonstration in the Harnackian cry "Back to Jesus!" "Back to Jesus" means the same in religion that "Back to Kant" means in philosophy, and "Back to Nature" means in anarchistic individualism. "Back to Jesus?" Where to? Has Jesus

been away for eighteen centuries that you must go back to their beginning to meet him? Was he not in all those saints from Augustine to Keble, who believed Him a present Christ? And if present to them was it in brief visits between long absences that left dearths of His Spirit in the world? Did His Church, the body of His Spirit, die when He left the earth, that Christendom since then has resembled His bier more than His throne, while holy men bent their heads over it as His mourners rather than His witnesses? And was it reserved for our late day and Harnack to discover Him as He really was during the three years of genuine ministry that inaugurated the eighteen centuries of corruption?

It must be so if Harnack's claim is allowed. For no previous backward hunt ever came upon the exact Jesus that Harnack dug from under the rubbish of the Four Gospels, where lay a fifth, namely, the Gospel according to Harnack. Though, strange to say, the Jesus of that Fifth Gospel acted out Harnack's anti-ecclesiastical role to such perfection that he might have been called Jesus the Harnack instead of Jesus the Christ.

But now that this great historic fact is established there is no need to travel so far back for our Harnack-Jesus. He is not in Jerusalem, but in Berlin, henceforth the Holy City of all crab Christians. Be your cry then "Back to Harnack," that intelligent Churchmen may understand how little of the Church's Christ you want in the dwarf of your backward clamor. The old cry no longer deceives them. When they hear it their answer echoes the refrain of the coon song, "Go way back and *sit down*." Sit down until you learn how to think upwards. You need philosophy more than psychology in your religion, a reason for your faith, the reason of your faith, the God of Reason for the man of reason, in a rational God-manhood which man's reason can forever adore without agnostic dodges towards the secular idols that take its place in Churches that worship The Real Absence.

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